

CONSOLATIONS

(from the letters of)

SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA

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FOREWORD.

Sasi Maharaj (Swami Ramakrishnananda) was the true personification of love and purity. Such purity, both of mind and body, I have yet to see. His love and devotion for Sri Ramakrishna, the ideal and goal of his life knew no bounds. They can be compared favourably only with that of Mahavir (Hanuman) to Sri Ramachandra. His love and affection for his Gurubhais Swami Vivekananda and Swami Brahmananda and others—whom he used to take as part and parcel of Sri Ramakrishna—bordered on worship. With him, there was no distinction between high and low, rich and poor. He was solicitous for every one's welfare. He would receive all with open arms and give them all he had. He sacrificed himself on the altar of duty—which was to worship the Master in every being and to help them to realise the Divine within. He himself would scrupulously observe what he wanted others to follow. He came in this world for Sri Ramakrishna and served Him

with his whole heart and soul and returned back to Him. Swami Vivekananda appropriately named him as Ramakrishnananda.

His letters must be very attractive and consoling. He was the staunchest, nay, the most orthodox devotee of Sri Guru Maharaj. He knew nothing else. He was full of Him. He had no other thought but of Him. His letters are bound to have profound effect on all who will go through them with some care and attention. His life, influence and whole-hearted work in Southern India is the foundation on which all are building now. People will appreciate him more and more, day by day. The brochure has my blessings and good wishes. May it bring consolation to all who will have a copy of it.

SHIVANANDA.

*Ramakrishna Advaita Ashram,
Benares City.
11th December, 1927.*



SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA.

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You want me to advise you how to get rid of the entanglements of this world, in answer to which let me remind you that what has been brought about by myriads of births cannot be done away with in a day. Yes. You are right. We should escape the snare of *samsâra* even from this moment. For, who knows when death will snatch us away from the loving embrace of our family ; but that does not mean we should make a sudden resolution in the course of our lives. The best way to suc-

*Selections from the epistles of Swami Ramakrishna-nanda.

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cess is to remain pleased in whatever state Sri Krishna has been pleased to place you, keeping your mind always turned towards Him, as a boy always turns towards his parent for help.

Stay peacefully where the Lord has been pleased to keep you. Read and ponder upon the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna. "A plant," says He, "should be kept under special guard by fencing it around lest goats make a feast over it. But, when it becomes a tree, hundreds of goats may take shelter under its spreading boughs." So, when a little faith and a spirit of renunciation shoot forth fortunately in one's mind, he should preserve them and nurture with special care, by keeping aloof from all worldly men; but when they are once firmly rooted *within*, then none can shake them at all.

Read good books. Let me suggest one. It is "The Imitation of Christ." It will give

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you great comfort. Engraft on your mind the words of consolation and true devotion which you are sure to find on every page of that valuable work of Thomas a Kempis, who was a true devotee of God and Christ.

The difference between a man and a brute mainly lies in this: a brute never wants to have his place changed as long as he gets food and shelter, while a man, a true man, is always attempting to get higher and higher. Incessant yearning for higher ideals is the characteristic of a true man. It should be the primary aim of all who want to be 'good and great to follow the precept : सर्व धर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।

Every one of us is trying hard to go to Him, but the path of every one of us is different. Each must make his own way and undertake

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his journey with the help of those conveyances which God has allowed him to have.

We should all “strike off our fetters”: but have you ever seen a fetter stricken off with a single and sudden blow? If you want to break through your fetters, you must be patient enough to apply a series of successive blows. Nothing sudden has brought about good. When the spirit of renunciation is uppermost in you, when all other bonds are too weak to bind you to the tree of *samsāra*, then you will drop down upon the *Lap of Hari*, even as a fruit when fully ripe.

You say that *samsāra* is a place of great temptation....that is indeed true! But, do you know that strong adverse winds serve but to confirm the roots of a weak tree? The good moral principles which are now not so strong in you are sure to get firmly rooted by an inces-

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sant struggle with temptations. Constant exercise and struggle improve one's physical health. And our mental health, too, is not above this law. Of course, the ground is too slippery to allow man to walk on without a fall, but he is sure to pass over the 'slough' if he pushes on boldly without caring much for any fall in his onward march. He should always look forward and march on boldly, falling and rising but never succumbing, till he is sure of having reached a place where the ground is clear of dirt and where he meets the one thing of his desire—the Divine One for whom he has been labouring so long. Do not care if you slip occasionally. To err is human. Do not lose heart. Walk firmly onward. No man can hope to get through the slimy path of the world, unscathed. And it is rank foolishness to sit down in the midst of the mire for fear of fall-

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ing in the attempt to get across. Do not forget the golden precept, "Try, try, try again." Remember Bruce of Scotland, who though defeated six times, conquered at last, the seventh time.

Be contented with whatever comes to you knowing that all things proceed from Sri Krishna directly. Do not forget to pray to Him incessantly. His Grace can give you whatever can really do you good. Always confide yourselves to His care. Be calm and quiet. Restlessness is a disease in itself. Know that religion means charity and satisfaction in self-surrender to the Will of the Most High.

" Act, act in the living present
Heart within and God overhead "

Pleasure and pain are the inevitable companions of every human being. When one comes, the other departs, but neither can remain long.

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Knowing this, we must not be sent out of our wits under their influence. Depend upon God entirely and do your duty. Always abide by the Will of God and take everything in the best light. You should not be anxious of the future. Whatever takes place here, on this earth, is for our good, for all things are disposed by God. In the meantime, it should be our duty to be dutiful.

Try to be dutiful to yourself, dutiful towards your wife and dutiful to your children, if you have any. Be dutiful to your relations, your friends and your neighbours. Be charitable, honest, plain and truthful. Above all, have an intense devotion and love for God, the author of your being. Lead this life, so long as it does not become one with your nature. For, you should know it for a fact, that unless a man is physically and mentally pure, he has no right

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to enter the holy shrine of Yoga. Because Yoga does not consist in merely holding the breath, and making *prânâyâma* and various postures. It means getting rid of all *Chitta vrittis* or desires. The pure alone can get rid of the evil effect of evil desires. So, try to be pure, by ever striving to be dutiful to your parents, your wife and children, relatives and friends, and your neighbours. Be an ideal householder first, for then alone will you be able to be a real Yogi.

You will be glad to hear that I am starting for Puri to bring our President* here. Whatever a good man like him touches becomes not only pure but also gets the purifying power. He is not coming to deliver lectures here but to give religion to those who need. There is not

*Swami Brahmananda.

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much work done in public lectures. What is there in hollow talk? Everyone can talk religion but where is he who can give it? Here is the man who can shower blessings on an afflicted heart, who can *give* religion and lead man to God. You need not be reminded of the absolute hollowness of the so-called wisdom of the modern age. Man does not become really wise by reading books written by men, whose earth-bound minds have not the power to soar in the infinite firmament of Truth, whose speculations end in agnosticism, scepticism or atheism, whose moral principles wanting the basis of Eternity are little better than jargon, and whose ignorance keeps them confined in the limited span of a precarious life, bounded on both sides by birth and death....The enthusiasm which you have been showing for the noble cause of the Sri Ramakrishna Mission should

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increase a thousandfold now, as the living embodiment of that Mission, His Most Serene Holiness is on the eye of coming to the South.

Never remain idle, for idleness is the progenitor of all evil thoughts. Be always vigilant in carrying out your duties. Shake off all dullness from within you. Laziness is the worst of all sins. There is no royal road to perfection. Sentimentalism is of no avail. You must labour hard and be always pleased with the place where God has been pleased to keep you. You are, indeed, a very bad lover of God if you cannot bear some few worldly troubles for His sake ! Those affairs which are displeasing to you now will all prove your great friends hereafter. God is more intelligent than any of us. He knows what is necessary for you and where to keep you. If you resent His Dispensation, you really resent His infinite Love and Grace.

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Obedience is Divine ; disobedience is satanic.

It is through sheer ignorance that we bring on ourselves all sorts of groundless anxieties. To work you have the right, but not to the fruits thereof. The leader should be a man having not the least egoism. Not "I" but "Thou"—this should be his motto. Remember this and go on working and you are sure to come out victorious. Talk sweetly to every one. Do not try to have everything done all at once. There is no power on Heaven and Earth that can withstand the strong current of spirituality which His Mission has already sent out with such success all over the world. Be happy that you are a chosen child of the Lord. Tell all members of the Vedanta Society that they are not only destined to illumine themselves but every one who will come in contact with them.

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Depend entirely upon yourself. Heaven helps those who help themselves. At the same time, co-operate with others. If help comes from outside, that is good ; if not, that is also good. Know that you are called upon by Sri Guru Maharaj to work for Him, and whoever will join you has to regard himself exceptionally fortunate,—for, it is not always that a man is called upon to work for God.

Do not worry yourself with the thought that His cause can be damaged in any way, by any one. If a man spits upward, the spittle will only soil and dirty him. Rest assured in the all-graciousness of Sri Ramakrishna. Nothing can go amiss in His all-holy Mission. If I ask you now and then something for my Sri Guru Maharaj, it is only for your own good. God has made you pure and, even if you try, you cannot become impure. We are ever thankful

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for your honest, whole-souled labour for the cause of Sri Ramakrishna. You are already blessed. Be assured whoever is honest and good is the most fortunate man in the world and, as you are one, you have already His Grace.

Nothing can bar the progress of what God intends to make successful. Unless one passes through the school of adversity, he cannot properly be called a man. We learn much from our troubles. When you have altogether resigned yourselves at the feet of the Lord, you have known the secret of a peaceful, blissful life. Life is a constant fight. You must fight hard with the senses, the result is all in the hands of God. To fight is your duty. Whether you gain or lose entirely depends on God.

Contentment is the only watchword that can ensure us a safe passage through adverse circumstances. God is good. God' does all.

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Therefore, He can do nothing but good. This is what all religions teach ; abide by it and peace of mind will naturally follow. We cannot force renunciation into the mind of any one. All are not intended to become monks or nuns. Every one has a particular mission and so are sent here by the Lord. Work in harmony with all. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.

You should not lose heart in adversity. Kunthi, the mother of the Pandavas, prayed to Sri Krishna to beset her with adversities, since in adversity alone is He more frequently remembered !.....Youth is the time when the senses naturally get the upper hand. You must try to be strong yourself so that they may not rule over you. Lustfulness is the chief enemy of young men. Look upon all women as forms of Mother. You should devote yourself to work,

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both physical and mental and keep your mind always fixed upon Bhagavan Sri Krishna. It is always wise to fix the mind upon a certain object, if it cannot always be fixed upon God. The mind thus trained will not find much difficulty in fixing itself upon the Holy Feet of Sri Krishna. Know that you are a God and consequently the Lord of the senses. Why should you allow the senses to lord over you? A weak man is the prey of wicked people as well as wicked propensities. Mental weakness is as bad as physical.

Let me remind you of certain passages from the Gita which console, invigorate and drive away despair from the minds of even the most dejected. When Arjuna asked Sri Bhagavan about the man who has gone astray from the true path in the midst of his progress and about such a one losing both wordly and religious

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concerns, the Bhagavan replied, नहि कल्याण कृत्स्नित् दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति । “ Oh ! Dear Friend, the man who does even the least of good deeds never becomes wretched in his after-life. He takes his birth in the home of the holy and the pious and begins a life of godliness and piety.” Hence, if even for a second you do feel or think a good thought, it is sure to be of great gain to you. Never give way to despair, for it is the Lord Himself that consoles every son of man, promising कौंतेय प्रति ज्ञानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति । “ Oh ! Arjuna ! declare it before all men that My devotee never meets with misfortune or destruction.”

Sri Ramakrishna used to console us with these words when we used to come to Him sorely vexed and disgusted at the diverse untoward circumstances which naturally devolve on

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men of the world : “ Imitate the nature of the anvil in the blacksmith’s shop. The blacksmith hammers it innumerable number of times in the course of a day ; but the anvil is as fixed, calm and collected as ever. The world may hammer you every now and then ; but do not shrink from it, even as the anvil in the smithy. Be firmly fixed in thy faith, in the mercy and kindness of the Almighty and all the troubles and turmoils of the world will have no power over thee. Instead of baffling thee, they will be baffled themselves.” Make the Gita your constant companion. Be always of good cheer. Never allow sorrow or dejection to take possession of your soul, which is ever free and blissful.

You need not complain that you are not successful in your attempts. So it is with almost all men. Only those who are already perfect, only a few Mahatmas, can assert that

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they are thoroughly pure in body, mind and action. To err is human. The only thing we should look after is never to forget loving Him, the Master of the Universe. Therefore take heart, and though you fall every now and then, try to rise up. Every child before it learns to walk falls down a hundred thousand times. I can assure you God helps those who help themselves.

Know this for certain—however bad a man may be, even if the whole world forsakes him, God's love towards him is as fervent as His love towards the most pious of men. The child may grow into a murderer but the mother's love remains undiminished. God is more loving and kind than all mothers taken together. Never lose faith in His loving kindness. He is always keeping watch upon the worst of sinners. Knowing this, be happy.

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Be not displeased with yourself. You are the child of God and by being displeased with yourself, you are displeased with God's child. Is it not bad? Honour yourself then, for you are the Son of God, Who by creating you has not committed any mistake,—for He is above all mistakes. As such, He is sure to do something through you, something for which He has brought you down here, in this world. The more your love towards God is increased, the less will your lustfulness be. Always try to walk along the proper path. Be truthful and good and have no sensual desires. Let this be your end and aim. Struggle hard and if, in the course of that struggle your foot slips, and you have to fall several times, what does that matter? Rise up again and go on struggling. Rest assured, you will conquer in the end. Never give up the struggle as long

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as you are not perfect, that is, as long as you are not what you wish yourself to be. May Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna save you from all dangers and keep you safe and sound.

Yes. You are right in your conclusion. We have to pull through our lives here, somehow or other, as a beggar or as a king. But this should be our end and aim—that we never forget Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna wherever we may be placed. This also is certain—wherever we are placed, God never forsakes us. It is He that moves us from one station in life to another. Knowing this, be happy. Every day I remember you and pray for you to my Sri Guru Maharaj. Since you have the photograph of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, I cannot but advise you to look upon Him as God Incarnate. Pray before His photograph and you are sure to get your desires fulfilled. There is none

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kinder than He. Oh! whenever I remember His Glory and Greatness, I become at once transported. Do not think Him to be not with you. He is always beside those who are good, and as you are one of the very good boys, I can say He is always with you, to save you from temptations. His photograph is His Living Self. Do not think it to be a mere photograph. It is His own Living Self. Offer flowers and incense unto Him, if they are available; if not, offer the flowers and incense of love and a contrite heart. He loves a contrite heart more than the whole heap of flowers and incense the world can produce. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna will surely help you, if you only sincerely ask Him for help. He is the Incarnation of Love and Mercy.

Do not infer, from my irregular correspondence, that I do not love my friends. Love is

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more mental than physical. I always ask the blessings of Sri Guru Maharaj to be showered on you and yours.

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna says, "As water has no definite form, and assumes the form of the vessel in which it is kept, so God has no definite form." But God is the God of all living beings and therefore you should not confine Him to human forms only. If your father dresses himself as a foreigner he does not lose your estimation and reverence on that account. Hence whatever be the form of God, because He is *your* God, you should love Him always. Of course, some particular form may be liked by some one as his *Ishtamurthi*. A Vaishnava loves the Krishna form, a Sâkta loves the Sakti form and so on. Please worship Him in whatever form you like most. Just as a daughter-in-law in a Hindu family reveres all members of

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the family but shares her bed only with her husband, you should have reverence for all the various Manifestations of the Deity but your *Ishtamurthi* should be the only Lord of your Life.

It is very good that you have great reverence and love for Sri Ramakrishna. By worshipping Him, you do not cease to be a devotee of the Mother, for, Sri Ramakrishna is the manifested form of Sakti. Sakti who is Infinite, and hence inaccessible, in order to be accessible to all has assumed the benign form of Sri Ramakrishna in this age. When she took up the form of Sri Krishna in the beginning of this yuga, she gave Her reasons for Her successive incarnations,

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽत्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

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Most of Sri Ramakrishna's direct disciples have seen Him after His disappearance from mortal view and, if you have a real longing to see Him, He is sure to satisfy you. God's forms are not allegorical. They are real. In Nirvikalpa Samadhi, there is neither creation nor creator ; there is no worship. Let us keep that aside, for the salt doll has lost itself in the ocean. But so long as there is individuality, there must be the personal God. God the creator is always personal and each manifestation of Him is as real as Himself. Worship is possible only in reference to the personal God. I advise you to take up this course. Work and live for Sri Ramakrishna and worship Him with your whole soul and thus attain salvation even in this life. You should look upon Him as God Himself. There is no difference between Father and Son, or Mother and Child. If by worshipping a stone

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image of God, a man attains salvation, much more is it possible to reach the goal by worshipping a living Image of Him. You cannot worship God directly, for you can have no conception of Him except through such man-Gods. If man-Gods like Sri Ramakrishna did not take their birth here, who could know anything about God? They are Columbuses in the land of spirituality.

There is no tree without roots ; no external without the internal. You should worship both outside yourself and inside yourself, as He is everywhere. He is as much in the Image as inside yourself. So worship him everywhere, always regarding yourself as His son or servant, and thus distinct from Him. The Dualist says, "I belong to Brahman" ; the Monist says, "I am one with Brahman." There is not much difference between these two statements, for

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He who belongs to Brahman is one with Him as well. Unification comes only in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi when, as I have already told you, there is no worship. A whole-souled devotion is the only way to realise Him. This is the general, as well as the special, teaching. Have a whole-souled devotion for Sri Ramakrishna. You are right....“He comes when the lower self is crushed.” The sacrifice of the lower self that imagines itself weak and sinful, of the animal in one’s self goes by the name of नरबलि. This can be done only by a real hero, for, जितं जगत् केन मनो हि येन “By whom is the world conquered? By him who has conquered his mind!”

A religion which is based upon weakness is absolutely false and harmful. नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः God can never be realised by the weak, says the Sruti. If I am God’s child, I am of

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His cast and if He is perfectly pure, I am also perfectly pure. So, if you want to love God really, you must have to be a God. देवोभूत्वा देवंयजेत्. You must become a God in order to worship God. What is the use of imagining yourself a sinner? You are infinite; it is sheer ignorance that makes you imagine that you are finite. Back of everyone there is Infinity! There is infinite power latent in you. So, be not diffident. You are sure to succeed in any path. The path of devotion is the best, as it is the most natural. Be devoted to God who is inside you. You are the most real temple of God. The temples outside are mere reminders of the real inner Temple. It is not wrong to set a watch over your thoughts when you want to drive away all weakening ideas from out of you. Say 'no,' 'no,' and there can be no poison in you even if bitten by a snake. "I am not a sinner; I am God's own child"—he who believes

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firmly in this knows, in course of time, that he is the child of God.

If you want to give up one bad habit, you must develop the corresponding good habit, and this requires tremendous *Rajas* or activity on your part. As Bhagavan says in the Gita—

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।
मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥

“ Verily ! This Divine Maya of Mine consisting of the Gunas is difficult to cross over ; those who devote themselves to *Me* alone, cross over this Maya.” Maya is God’s power ; there is no difference between God and His power. Just as sugar cannot be imagined apart from sweetness, milk apart from whiteness, so God cannot be conceived apart from His Sakti. We do not pray to a powerless man, knowing such prayers to be useless. God is All-powerful and therefore

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we pray to Him. So, whoever prays to God worships Sakti. Every one in the world is a Sâkta, for who is there that does not worship Power ?

God does not dwell somewhere beyond the clouds. He is in the heart of all living beings.

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति

“ The Lord, Oh ! Arjuna ! ” says Sri Krishna, “ dwells in the heart of all beings.” Ordinary living beings do not know it. God comes before us in the form of the ignorant, the needy, the diseased, the destitute, the famished—so that we may serve Him in these forms and thus edify ourselves. To work we have the right but not to the fruits thereof. The result is not in our hands. Let us always work more for the benefit of ourselves than with the idea of benefitting others, as they belong to God and God makes them what they are. We cannot correct God, nor can we find fault with

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His method of work. That will be absolute foolishness. By serving others, we serve ourselves—by expanding ourselves.

Does not the child ask of the father or the mother whatever he wants, fully knowing that his prayers are sure to be answered? Just in the same manner, you should also pray to your God for everything needed for your realisation. Why do you want to be the Son of God? In order to get rid of जगत्ज्वाला (miseries of the world),—is it not? So, where is the difference between Bhakti and Gnanam?

Allow me to point out to you that peace is one's own mental property and hence you should never allow either household or social affairs to intrude into the holy precincts of your mind, where only Parama Shivam should reign supreme, showering peace and bliss upon you.

Of course, complete self-surrender can

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come only when one is free from egotism—the most invulnerable enemy of man. The idea that “I am so-and-so” is the cause of repeated births and deaths. The more you can get rid of it, the more will you be able to realise your spiritual nature, which is obscured by “I”. The first personal pronoun is at the root of all our miseries. Hence our primary duty should be to get rid of it somehow or other. This can be done by the service of the great, by good works without caring for results, by concentration or discrimination. The first is the easiest and the best. If you can place yourself at the feet of a true Teacher, your egotism will gradually wear away by that very attitude of yours as a servant. If a man actually places himself under the guidance of Sri Ramakrishna he is sure at once to be saved by him. But very few, almost none can do it, as every man is more or less an

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egotist. If by vicarious atonement, you mean Self-surrender, and I think that it is its proper meaning, then there is almost no one in the world qualified for it. If I am here and if I like to be happy here, I must do that which will make me perfectly happy, free from all fears. As God, the all-powerful, and all merciful is to take care of me, I being His son, I have no fears. God is both father and mother to you.

त्वमेव माता च पितात्वमेव

त्वमेव बंधुश्च सखात्वमेव ।

त्वमेव विद्याद्राविणं त्वमेव

त्वमेव सर्वं ममदेवदेव ॥

“ Thou art my mother ; Thou art my father ;
Thou art my friend ; Thou art my companion ;
Thou art my learning ; Thou art my wealth ;
Thou art my all-in-all. Oh ! My Lord of Lords !! ”

And Sri Ramakrishna is all these.

